



Confédération Européenne de l'Industrie de la Chaussure
European Confederation of the Footwear Industry

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**MODERNISING VET FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND INNOVATION IN EUROPE'S FASHION
INDUSTRY REGIONS AND CLUSTERS**

On the 15th of July 2020, the Erasmus+ Blueprint TCLF industries 2030 project consortium organised a public webinar titled "Modernising VET for Economic Recovery and Innovation in Europe's Fashion Industry Regions and Clusters" to emphasise the relevant role of Vocational Education and Training in developing applied innovation in TCLF industries, and support the economic recovery and further growth of EU regions. Project partners will build on the enthusiasm and interest demonstrated by the numerous public and private stakeholders attending the meeting to work towards the establishment of a formalised Network of EU Regions pledging to continue to support VET modernisation in the European TCLF industries.

"Upskilling and reskilling can't only be left to the education sector. It must be seen as a societal challenge and addressed collectively" - Joao Santos, European Commission, DG Employment, Inclusion & Social Affairs.

There are currently about 50 million people unemployed in Europe, and 70% of EU companies report that their inability to find qualified workforce hampers investments and further growth. Research shows that VET has a much higher employability rate than traditional upper Secondary schools. Consequently, VET must take centre stage and become a priority for regional and national authorities if one wants to adequately address skills mismatches and allow European SMEs to remain competitive. In addition, an agile and responsive VET system is a key element to address current challenges: the green and digital transitions, and the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. To be able to overcome such challenges, Joao Santos insists that all relevant sectoral stakeholders must get together and act in a concerted and strategic way. Only a common, coordinated approach to upskilling and reskilling that has all players on board will foster VET excellence and further develop VET's pivotal role in economic competitiveness, social fairness, and SMEs resilience.

"Innovation is not only about research, it is also about applied innovation, and VET plays an essential role here. This is why we want to integrate VET ecosystems into regional development and smart specialisation strategies" Carmen Arias, Secretary General of the European Footwear Confederation.

Smart public investments and support to modernise and integrate VET in regional development and Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) can only bring positive results to EU regions. Because VET is a catalyser of innovation and applied research, because it best addresses demographic, labour and technological changes, and because it contributes to valorise human capital, strong VET ecosystems will make regional economic structures more responsive to disruptions and uncertainty, boost TCLF companies' growth, and attract better-qualified young talents. This is particularly the case in the TCLF sectors where geographical concentration is high and many companies operate in regional clusters. EU regions will, therefore, reap the benefits and added-value of strong VET systems right at home. This is why the S4TCLF Blueprint project will work with partner regions towards the establishment of a Network of European regions pledging to support modern TCLF VET systems. This network will gather regional authorities in order to share best practices, discuss local successes in skills policy with European peers, and launch concrete joint activities that promote and strengthen VET.



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The webinar was an opportunity for project partners to demonstrate the potential of VET in terms of contribution to both human capital and regional development, in a bid to engage European regional authorities to continue investing and upgrading VET towards excellent VET systems that efficiently and rapidly respond to TCLF companies' needs. Moreover, in order to succeed in this modernisation of VET, collaboration between public and private stakeholders needs to be regular, and VET centres should fully participate in the development and implementation of regional Smart Specialisation Strategies. As a next step, the TCLF project partners will follow-up these first fruitful discussions with those regions with TCLF industries presence that are committed to join the Network of European Regions supporting the modernisation of TCLF VET.

For more information about our Blueprint project, visit our website [HERE](#).